



Rethinking Boredom

Two Optional Icebreakers (Optional)

1. **Icebreaker 1 - “Boredom Wars”**: Everyone in the group should come up with something that they think is boring. Since this is an icebreaker, creative and humorous ideas are welcome (For example, “Watching the mating ritual of snails in heat). The group leader should then make a master list. Pick two things from the master list at random and have the group vote via live discussion which one sounds more boring. If it seems to be a tie, the group leader/counselor can break the tie with their opinion on the more boring option. Eliminate the item from the list which loses the vote. Keep doing this repeatedly until there is only one item boring left on the list which wins the title as **“Most Boring”**

LESSON – When it comes to boredom, it can always be worse – There is always something even more boring than what you may be doing or have to do

2. **Icebreaker 2 – “Spice it Up”** - When food is bland or boring tasting what do we often do? We spice it up to make it taste less boring. For this icebreaker, each person should bring up something commonplace from day-to-day life that can be potentially boring despite being necessary or required. The group should then come up with some creative (and even funny) ways to “spice up” that boring life activity or responsibility. Let each person in the group have a turn to come up with an idea that the group can then come up with ideas for “spicing it up”.
 - **Example** – Group member picks “Going to the dentist” as boring life activity. A group member suggests: “Have the dentist set up his office during a live heavy metal concert” as a way to “spice it up” and make going to the dentist less boring.

LESSON – One way to conquer boredom is to be creative and think outside of the box.

Overcoming Boredom in the Substance Use Change Process:

Introduction– Boredom is quite often cited as one of the more challenging aspects when dealing with recovery from substance use issues. It is safe to say that no one likes boredom, and we all have to face boredom at one time or another. Therefore, it makes sense to be prepared for boredom when making life changes as we move away from a life of addictive behaviors. One way to do this is to adjust our viewpoint on boredom. **We can learn and practice mastering boredom instead of allowing feelings of boredom to derail our progress.**

As a group consider and discuss the following thoughts about refocusing the viewpoint on boredom. After each point is read, discuss ways in which you may agree (or disagree) with these points and discuss how each point may apply personally in your life and experience:

- **Boredom is not an excuse** – “I started getting high again because I was bored”. “I went back out with my old friends who get high because I was bored” “I stopped my routine for recovery because it got to be boring” – Statements like these are just excuses. Sure, boredom happens in recovery, and it can be a relapse trigger, however it still is not a valid reason for returning to a self-destructive lifestyle. As you read on you will see that there are better ways to cope with feelings of boredom
- **We can learn to accept boredom** – Another way to rephrase this is that we can learn to **tolerate boredom**. Very few people on this earth have a life that is exciting 24-7. Boredom on occasion is a part of most people’s lives. In fact, most people welcome some “down time”. For example, some really good stories and movies have slower parts that help build up the overall plot and add to the larger story. We can use these “less exciting” times in our lives to our advantage as down time can be a productive part of our recovery process



- **Boredom does not have to be as bad as it seems** – *“Boredom is what boredom does”* – In other words, what we choose to do when we feel bored is the most influential factor in overcoming boredom. Preparing ahead of time to fill our more boring times in life with positive or productive activities can make all of the difference. Reckless decisions based on boredom often have reckless outcomes
- **We can embrace boredom as a challenge rather than an obstacle** – Our attitude about boredom means so much when it comes to conquering boredom. For example, if we get in the habit of sulking and just staying stagnant during boring times then our boredom will likely persist. Rather, we can learn to look at boredom as a challenge to overcome using creativity and ingenuity. A person with a good attitude about boredom may say something like: “I’m feeling bored right now, so what new and interesting idea can I explore to get rid of this feeling?” This approach will help rather than just sitting there waiting for boredom to pass on its own or doing the same old boring things to fill boring times like scrolling the internet or social media aimlessly or surfing channels on TV.
- **Boredom can motivate you (if you let it)** – Similar to the previous points, if we feel like there is too much boredom in life, rather than give up, let this motivate you to make changes. If you feel like your life is far too boring, this can be the fire that ignites a positive lifestyle change like seeking a new career, learning a new skill, taking on a new responsibility, exploring a new hobby or doing something creative or innovative.
- **Gratitude can help (“I’d rather be bored and stable than excited but in chaos or trouble”)** – A stable life in recovery may at times be boring by comparison with the substance using lifestyle, yet the safety and security of recovery far outweighs the chaos and consequences of addiction. Therefore, we can actually learn to be grateful to be bored occasionally if it means a better overall life for us. It is better to be a little bored but happy rather than feel excited in between periods of misery (like in active addiction for many)

Skills for Mastering Boredom

Review the following and work on making your own “Boredom Plan” by taking note of which skills and suggestions you are going to apply in your own life to prepare for, cope with and conquer boredom

1. **Look beyond entertainment** – Sure, things like, TV, YouTube, internet, and social media can help with boredom, but these things alone can get tiring, boring and unfulfilling especially over time. There is nothing wrong with these types of entertainment but its best to not have them as your only way to deal with boredom or it is likely you will stay bored.
2. **Creativity** – Music, art, building, designing, writing, developing, etc. are all great ways to overcome boredom on a long-term basis. Think outside the box! Create and innovate
3. **Learning** – Taking an interest in a topic and building our knowledge and skills can be a great way to overcome boredom. Learning a language, studying history, researching the origins or science of things that interest you or finding out how things are made or work, are examples of learning that can be very interesting. It may take time to develop a love for learning about various topics, but it works!



4. **When a task is boring, try it a different way** – If there is something in life that you have to do that you find boring, is there a different way to approach it? Again, this could require creativity. For example, doing something like combining chores, like cleaning with exercise, dancing or singing can make it much less boring. Meeting your best friend at the laundromat then getting coffee can make a task like that fun, for example
5. **Take healthy risks** – If you are bored can you think outside the box and try some things that you thought you would never like? You might surprise yourself if you try a few times. Maybe a friend or your partner has a hobby or interest that you thought you would never try – Why not try it again with them a few times even if you didn't like it in the past when you were using. An interest for new things can catch on with time and practice if you keep an open mind and patiently approach new ideas.
6. **Consider things from your youth** – A lot of people find interest in going back to things they did when they were growing up as they are able to reignite the same passion for these things as adults. Maybe when you were a kid you were into comics or collecting something or maybe there was a game or sport you loved as a kid you could get back into as an adult.
7. **Consider helping others** – So many people have found fulfillment in helping and doing things for others. For example. learning to bake cookies for yourself is one thing but doing it to share your baked goods with friends, family or neighbors can be even far more fulfilling and motivating. So many millions of people have stories of volunteering or just helping their community or neighbors as a satisfying way to spend their time.
8. **Learn to engage deeper** – If there is something you have to do in life that you find boring, ask yourself: Am I fully engaged in this process? For example, sometimes people may try 12 step meetings and find that sitting there listening quietly can be boring. However, becoming an active part of the group by participating and taking on a commitment can deepen appreciate and engagement which is a great way to alleviate boredom. This can apply in a lot of life areas as well based on the general rule: “We get out what we put in” to an activity

Closing discussion – What is included in your Boredom Plan? Choose at least 3 and be specific:

1 –

2 –

3 –

4 –